

Sūrah Ṣaff

Central Theme and Direction of Address

This *sūrah* addresses those Muslims who after pledging a covenant of “to listen and to obey” with the Prophet (sws) were evading fighting in the cause of God. They are admonished that if they persist with this attitude even after this pledge, then they should remember that they will reach the same fate as that of the Jews. They disobeyed their prophet Moses (sws) at every step after pledging obedience to him. They were punished by God on this attitude such that He led their hearts away and they were forever deprived of guidance. Consequently, when Jesus (sws) brought to them glad tidings of a final prophet and worked open miracles before them, they regarded these miracles to be magic and rejected them. Now they have adopted a hostile attitude against Islam even though it is bound to prevail in Arabia over all the religions present much as they and the Idolaters may oppose it.

After that the correct attitude is delineated which Muslims should adopt, and which is an obvious outcome of the pledge they had made with the Messenger of God. They are simultaneously given glad tidings of the great victory which they will achieve in the near future if they strongly adhere to their promise.

At the end of the *sūrah*, Muslims are presented with the exemplary attitude of a group which they adopted by outdoing one another to adopt the truth and by supporting its cause.

Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

Reflection on the contents of this *sūrah* will show that just as in the previous Madīnan *sūrahs*, the character of the Hypocrites is discussed, in this *sūrah* too the character of their factions is discussed. The only difference is that the type of Hypocrites which were discussed in the previous *sūrahs* were entangled in external problems and impediments besides their inner-weaknesses. However, in this *sūrah* and in the subsequent Madīnan *sūrahs*, those Hypocrites are discussed who were mostly afflicted with inner-weaknesses. For example, in this *sūrah* and in Sūrah Jumu‘ah, which is the next *sūrah* and a counterpart of this *sūrah*, the malady of love for life and wealth is pinpointed.

Analysis of the Discourse

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following four sections:

Section I (1-4): In the introductory part of the *sūrah*, a warning is sounded to those who even after pledging a covenant of *sam'u ta'at* (to listen and obey) at the hands of the Prophet (sws) were abstaining from fighting in the way of God. They are informed that this attitude of breaking the covenant after pledging it is something which is more condemnable in the eyes of the Almighty. He is pleased by those who, in accordance with the requisites of the covenant pledged, gather all their energy whenever the need arises to fight, and fight as if they are a solid cohesive structure.

Section II (5-9): Those who desist from fighting in the cause of God after they have accepted faith and pledged their obedience are similar to the Jews and they shall meet a similar fate as well. They had adopted a similar attitude with their own Prophet as well: they would fervently pledge obedience to him, but whenever they were tested by an occasion, they would prove worthless. The Prophet Moses (sws) often sorrowfully complained about this behaviour, but they never mended their ways. The Almighty, according to His laws, therefore, took away from them the ability to understand and remain on the right path because of their own wrong attitude. They had adopted this improper behaviour with the Prophet Jesus (sws) as well. He had shown them some striking miracles and in very clear words gave them glad tidings of the last of the Prophet (sws). The Jews, however, as a result of their unbecoming attitude, dismissed these miracles as acts of magic and rejected his Prophethood. They persisted with this attitude and today are showing hostility to Islam on the basis of lies and falsehood, even though these efforts will be in vain. Islam is the glowing light of the Almighty which they can never blow to extinction. Contrary to their wishes and those of the Idolaters', it shall achieve its supremacy over other religions of Arabia.

Section III (10-13): The weaker Muslims are urged to adopt the right path and refrain from their attitude of distrust and hypocrisy. They should truly profess faith in God and the Prophet (sws) and fight for the cause of Islam by spending as much as they can for this cause and by presenting their lives for it. This is the true path of success if they would only try to understand. If they adopt this attitude, they would attain salvation in the Hereafter which is the real success and in this world also the Almighty through His well-earned help shall also bless them with the conquest of Makkah they desire so much.

Section IV (14): The addressees of the *sūrah* are exhorted to follow the footsteps of the disciples of Jesus (sws). In the beginning of the *sūrah*,

Muslims had been advised not to follow the Jews. Here, at the end, they have been urged to follow a group which had remained on the right path and whose correct attitude of taking the initiative in accepting the truth was ultimately responsible for the supremacy of the believers.

Text and Translation

Section I: Verses (1-9)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٢) كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٣) إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُمْ بُنْيَانٌ مَرْصُوصٌ (٤) وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٥) وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ (٦) وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُوَ يُدْعَى إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٧) بُرِيدُونَ لِيُظْفَرُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ (٨) هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ (٩)

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God. He is the Mighty, the Wise One. (1)

Believers! Why do say something you never do? It is most detestable in God's sight that you should say something what you never do. God holds dear those who fight for His cause as if they are one solid wall. (2-4)

And remember when Moses (sws) said to his people: "O People of Mine! Why do you torment me even though you know very well that I am sent to you by God?" So when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray. And God does not guide the evil-doers. (5)

And remember when Jesus son of Mary said: "O Israelites! I am sent forth to you from God in realization of the predictions which exist before me in the Torah, and to give glad tidings of a Messenger who will come after me. His name is Ahmad. So when he came to them with clear signs, they said: "This is plain magic." (6)

And who can be more unjust than the person who fabricates a falsehood about God even though He is being called upon to Islam? And God does not guide the wrongdoers. They seek to extinguish the light of God with blows of their mouths; but God will perfect His light, much as the disbelievers may dislike it. It is He who has sent forth His Messenger with guidance and the true religion so that he may make it prevail over all religions, much as the Idolaters may dislike it. (7-9)

Explanation

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (١)¹

The purpose of this verse can be to urge the addressees and also to express self-sufficiency. In the subsequent verses, the Hypocrites who were shirking the responsibility of *jihād* are rebuked for breaching their promise and for showing cowardice. Both the above-mentioned objectives can relate to this topic. If the first of them is implied, then the meaning of the verse would be: it is a pity if someone evades *jihād* in the cause of the God Who is ardently glorified and worshipped by every object of this universe and Whose Might prevails over everything and wisdom is found in every work He does.

If the second of the above-mentioned objective is implied, then the meaning would be: when every object of this universe is fervently glorifying and worshipping God, and He alone is the real Mighty and Wise Being, little does He care if some cowardly people desist from undertaking *jihād* for His cause.

Also worthy of note is the fact the word used in this *sūrah* is سَبَّحَ while in the next, it is يُسَبِّحُ. The difference in both these styles is that the past tense is used for statement of a fact and reality, while the imperfect tense (*mudarrāʿ*) is used for portrayal and for the depiction of continuity.

The occurrence of the attributes الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ without any particle of copulation bears evidence to the fact that they simultaneously occur in the noun they qualify. In other words, God at the same time is dominant on everything and every act that emanates from Him is replete with wisdom. The implication of these attributes is that who can be more worthy of being trusted than the being who possesses these attributes. Unfortunate are the people who do not repose trust even in such a being.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٢) كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا

1. All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God. He is the Mighty, the Wise One.

Though the address is general, it is directed at those Muslims who would claim to be highly committed to faith and Islam and to spending and *jihād* for the cause of God yet when the time to prove themselves would arrive, they would turn out to be absolute cowards. It is they who are addressed and rebuked that why do they claim something when they do not have the guts to fulfill it; if they think that by merely proclaiming their commitment to *jihād* would be enough, then this notion of theirs is baseless. This attitude will not earn them the pleasure of God; it will only earn them His wrath and anger for their attitude amounts to sheer hypocrisy.

The importance of a person's words depends on his sincerity and righteousness. If a person in the very first phases refuses to help someone who was seeking his help even though he was capable enough to do so, then this refusal would though be against decency, sympathy and Islamic brotherhood and an act disliked by God; however, a person who fully assured a needy person of his help, yet when the time came to fulfil his commitment, deceived him, then such a person will earn much greater wrath and dislike of the Almighty.

This attitude is condemnable in every case; however, if the matter relates to the Prophet (sws) and to those who profess faith in him, then its gravity increases even more. People who do not accept the message of a prophet of God are worthy of His wrath as they should be; however, much more worthy of His wrath are those people who verbally claim their commitment to everything that is required but practically are not able to fulfil it or are only able to fulfil those commitments which suit their desires and when some important issue arises, they adopt an evasive attitude. Obviously, such an attitude is more dangerous than that of open enemies of religion because they were the enemies in the garb of friends. It was as if they committed high treason against the army they were a part of.

Another reason because of which they became worthy of the wrath of God was that once they accepted Islam it was as if they acknowledged it as something which appealed to them and satisfied their intellect. From this aspect, their case is different from those who are the enemies of Islam because they have yet to understand at the very outset. If a person does not understand something, then this is after all an excuse on the basis of which he can be granted concession. However, people who have acknowledged that they have understood it start evading its practical

2. Believers! Why do say something you never do? It is most detestable in God's sight that you should say something what you never do.

requisites, then this can only be because of their moral weakness. Such a weakness cannot become an excuse for anyone. In every case, it is a wrongdoing which will entail God's wrath and abhorrence.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُمْ بُنْيَانٌ مَرْصُوصٌ³ (٤)

This verse unfolds the weakness on which they have been rebuked. It is evident from this verse that a special weakness they were inflicted with was that in order to lay claim to their sincerity and commitment to lay down their lives if needed, they would express fervour to undertake *jihād*; however, once they were asked to do it, they would evade it. In Sūrah Nisā', this weakness of theirs is referred to in the following words:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً (٧٧:٤)

Have you not seen those who were told: "Abstain your hands and show diligence in the prayer and pay the *zakāh*," [they would show haste for war]; however, when war was made mandatory upon them, one group among them feared people the way they should fear God or even more. (4:77)

In Sūrah Tawbah, these people are rebuked in the followed way:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَا لَكُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ انْفِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَتَأْقَلْتُمْ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ (٣٨:٩)
Believers! What has happened to you that when you are ordered: "Fight for the cause of God," you drop to the ground? (9:38)

Such was the cowardice in them that even if they would hesitantly set off for *jihād*, they would not have the courage to fight in a united and cohesive manner; their persistent effort would be to somehow save their skins. In Sūrah Tawbah, their cowardice is portrayed thus:

لَوْ يَجِدُونَ مَلْجَأً أَوْ مَغَارَاتٍ أَوْ مُدْخَلًا لَّوَلَّوْا إِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْمَحُونَ (٥٧:٩)

If they are able find a shelter or a cave or any refuge, they will cut lose their strings and run towards it. (9:57)

While pointing to such weaknesses of these people are they told that their effort of pleasing God by merely making tall claims will only hasten

3. God holds dear those who fight for His cause as if they are one solid wall.

his wrath and anger. God never likes people who show off, and are devoid of the spirit of sacrifice. He holds only those people as dear who fight for His cause like one solid mass, and stare the enemy in its eye.

The word بُيْنَانٌ means “a building”; however, here it refers to a wall. If a single brick of a wall is displaced from its position, it becomes very easy to dismantle it. For this very reason, Muslims are warned in Sūrah Anfāl that in case of a formal army attack if a soldier of that army runs away from the position he was deployed, then he earns the wrath of God and Hell will be his abode: (١٦:٨) فَقَدْ بَاءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَبُئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (so he returned with the wrath of God and Hell shall be his home, and it is an evil abode, (8:16)).

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ لِمَ تُوذُّونَنِي وَقَدْ تَعْلَمُونَ أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ⁴

The verse explains the attitude of the hypocrites by citing the example of the Jews. They would express great zeal and enthusiasm for *jihād* but when the time would come, they would back away. When Moses (sws) asked them to attack the Palestinians, they told him that the Palestinians are a very strong and powerful people and they would not like to succumb to their might and that Moses (sws) and his God should go and fight them and that until these Palestinians vacated the city they do not have the courage to enter it.

The Jews adopted the same attitude in their war mentioned in Sūrah Baqarah. With great zeal, they asked the Prophet Samuel (sws) to select for them a leader for this *jihād*; however, when this selection was made, they withdrew from the whole campaign.

A study of the Torah reveals that there was not one instance in which they whole-heartedly obeyed Moses (sws). Many a time did Moses (sws) pitifully express his sorrow and anger on their attitude, and even rebuked them in very stern words; however, they never changed their attitude; in fact, their hearts grew more callous as time passed.

The section of the verse: يَا قَوْمِ لِمَ تُوذُّونَنِي وَقَدْ تَعْلَمُونَ أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ refers to the sorrows and complaints of Moses (sws) which he repeatedly expressed on their disobedience and violation of promises. The Torah is also replete with these expressions. The Jews had no doubts on the prophethood of Moses (sws). In spite of being convinced that he was a

4. And remember when Moses (sws) said to his people: “O People of Mine! Why do you torment me even though you know very well that I am sent to you by God?” So when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray. And God does not guide the evil-doers.

prophet of God, they continued to disobey him because of their own greed for worldly pleasures, lack of courage and meanness.

The words فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ express the punishment which God repeatedly meted out to them as per His unalterable practice: when after constant warnings and reminders they did not rectify the direction of their hearts, the Almighty twisted them in the very direction they chose for themselves. It is a permanent feature of human temperament that it will adapt to whatever circumstances it is conditioned. If a person tries to mould it to ways which are against the norms of sense and reason, it initially resists this; however, if a person remains adamant on this, his temperament will adapt and accept this change.

The practice of God in providing guidance to human beings or depriving them of it is in accordance with this very feature of their temperament. The Almighty does not forcibly guide a person or leads him astray. He has bestowed man with the awareness of good and evil and given him the freedom to choose between the two. If a person adopts good, the Almighty facilitates him on this and augments his passion for it, and if he adopts evil, the Almighty at times also gives him the chance and respite to do so.

The words وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ express the fact that it is not the Almighty's way of doing things that He forcibly guides a person who himself likes to go astray. He guides only those who honour and value guidance and themselves want to be guided.

This, as alluded to above, is a warning sounded to the hypocrites that if they too follow the attitude adopted by the Jews, their hearts too shall be led astray the way the hearts of the Jews were. Then they will continue to tread on the wrong path, and will be deprived of the urge and will to tread the right path.

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ⁵ (٦)

This verse points to the fact that it is because their hearts had been led astray that they were deprived of professing faith in Jesus (sws), and today are also involved in the tomfoolery of rejecting the last Messenger

5. And remember when Jesus son of Mary said: "O Israelites! I am sent forth to you from God in realization of the predictions which exist before me, and to give glad tidings of a Messenger who will come after me. His name is Ahmad." So when he came to them with clear signs, they said: "This is plain magic."

of God whose arrival had been predicted by Jesus (sws). The fact of the matter however is that the light of God shall be perfected; neither will they be able to harm it nor the Idolaters.

Jesus (sws) is the last Messenger among the Israelites. He is mentioned here to show that the attitude which they adopted with Moses (sws) and were cursed as a result of it continued to be an essential part of their personalities till the end. Thus it was because of this very attitude that they also rejected Jesus (sws), and are now opposing Islam. The implication is that so fatal is this disease that once a person is inflicted with it, it becomes impossible for him to do away with it. One should thus avoid being afflicted with it.

The words مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ were uttered by Jesus (sws) to substantiate his messengerhood. His arrival verified the predictions which were found about him in the Torah. The clearest prediction regarding Jesus (sws) had been made by his predecessor: the Prophet John (sws). The latter declared that the very purpose of his coming was to give glad tidings of a messenger who was to follow him. While giving these glad tidings about Jesus (sws), he also referred to the predictions about him that were already mentioned in the Torah because of which people were waiting for his arrival. All these facts have been stated at various appropriate places in this *tafsīr*. It would not be possible to reproduce them here.

The literal meaning of مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ has already been discussed at an earlier instance. People who interpret this phrase to mean that Jesus (sws) is one who verifies the Torah have neither been able to understand the true context and background of these words nor were able to ascertain its true meaning. Jesus (sws) did not utter these words to say that he believed in the Torah; he actually uttered them, as referred to above, to attest to his own prophethood and messengerhood. Wherever these words occur in the Qur'ān, they occur in this context. For this purpose, it would be meaningless for him to attest the Torah. If he attested to the Torah, then this would only prove that he believed in the Torah. How can it prove his own messengerhood. Furthermore, this also should be kept in mind that every portion of the Torah was neither attested to by Jesus (sws) nor Muḥammad (sws). In fact, Jesus (sws) unveiled its interpolations and so did the Qur'ān. Moreover, the Qur'ān has been even more vehement in criticizing it.

The words وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ point to the fact that simultaneously Jesus (sws) also proclaimed his mission of giving glad tidings of a Messenger who will follow him and whose name would be Aḥmad. As far as the predictions regarding this Messenger are

concerned, they were being transmitted from the time of Abraham (sws), as is mentioned in the next *sūrah*. After Abraham (sws), Moses (sws) too gave these glad tidings. These predictions are also found in various books of the Torah being ascribed to certain other prophets. Whether the People of the Book accept it or not, an unbiased person is compelled to accept the fact that these predictions can only imply Muḥammad (sws). In short, as far as the glad tidings regarding him are concerned, Jesus (sws) is not alone in giving them. However, his predictions are different from the rest in three respects:

Firstly, he did not regard making this prediction to be a secondary objective of his; he regarded to be his special objective.

Secondly, he ascertained the exact time when this prediction will materialize.

Thirdly, he specified the name of the Prophet (sws) in his prediction.

All these three aspects are very important; for this reason I will now briefly discuss them.

The first of these is very evident from the words of the Qur'ān. An even greater testimony to this is the name of the scripture revealed to him. Authorities are unanimous the word "Injīl" is a Greek word and means "glad tidings". The question arises that out of all divine scriptures why was this scripture chosen to have this name. It is possible that because of their self-fabricated belief about salvation, they interpret this word to refer to the glad tidings of salvation for mankind; however, this interpretation is absolutely childish. The belief of salvation invented by Saint Paul may have some reasoning in his meaningless philosophy; not even the weakest of reasoning to support it is found in the Gospels. Just as the mission of the prophets of God has remained delivering glad tidings, delivering warnings has also remained a part of it; in fact, the latter had preponderance in it. Just as both these obligations have been discharged by all the prophets, it has also been discharged by Jesus (sws). He gave glad tidings of success and salvation to those who embrace faith and also warned the disbelievers of Hell. There is no reason in spite of this that his scripture be specifically called "Good News" (*injīl*). On the other hand, it is quite plausible that this name was given to his scripture because his specific mission and distinguishing feature was to give glad tidings of the last Messenger of God who was to follow him. He was divinely appointed for this mission. For this very reason, his scripture was called "Good News" (*injīl*) so that the very name depicts his mission, and on the Day of Judgement this name could be used to bear witness against the Christians: they did not profess faith in the very Messenger for whom they had been divinely appointed. In this manner, they became the true manifestation of the parable of the

virgins proclaimed by Jesus (sws): all night they lighted lamps while waiting for the bridegroom; however, at the time of his arrival, the oil in the lamps finished and they went off to sleep.⁶

A deep deliberation on the Gospels will reveal that a very commonly discussed topic in them is the glad tidings for the kingdom of Heaven. It is discussed in numerous ways in diverse styles and various parables. The feature of this divine kingdom mentioned, the concept of its gradual development given, the traits of those who will be able to enter it and of those who will be deprived of it – a deep reflection will show that all these facets are glad tidings of the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) and of the blessings of the pious system which spread in the land through the Companions. This is not the right place for a detailed explanation of this issue; otherwise, I would have given examples to duly support my view. However, I do hope that people who will deliberate on the Gospels from this aspect will agree with me that their real subject is to give glad tiding of the Kingdom of Heaven which was set up through the blessed efforts of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws).

The fact that this prediction was made such that the period of its realization was also determined increases its importance a lot. Before it, none of the predictions which have been communicated regarding the advent of Muḥammad (sws) and other prophets contains any information on the time of their advent. All of them depict an undetermined future. However, this prediction specifically mentions that Muḥammad (sws) will be sent after him and that he has been sent to give his glad tidings and pave his way. The question now arises that who was the personality which appeared after him in this whole world in whom or in the system established by him the traits and parables depicted by Jesus (sws) completely manifested themselves? If a person is not stubborn and obstinate, then none other than the name of Muḥammad (sws) can be understood to be implied. If Christians do not want to take this name, then they should relinquish the Gospels. Till when will they keep giving glad tidings of someone who is yet to arrive in two thousand years

The third aspect is also very important – in fact, it can be regarded to be the most important: the glad tidings given by Jesus (sws) about an arriver were given by specifying his name. This meant that the Almighty wanted that there remains nothing concealed and ambiguous about the matter, and everything comes crystal clear. The reason for this being that the obduracy of those who reject this prediction becomes absolutely evident and they are conclusively conveyed this fact by the Almighty.

However, very deplorable is what those people did who drastically

6. Matthew, 25:1-6.

altered the names mentioned in the Torah. They either altered them in such a manner that there remains no means to determine their real form or translated and re-translated them in such a way that the translations were far apart from the actual and it became virtually impossible to get to the original.

As an example, I will present the words “Marwah” and “Bakkah”. Both these names occur in the Torah. Marwah is the place where Abraham (sws) presented the sacrifice of his son Ishmael (sws), and Bakkah (Makkah) is the place where Abraham (sws) settled Ishmael (sws) and prayed that a messenger should arise from his progeny. Since the Jews were not ready at any cost that Abraham (sws) be linked to Makkah and that the sacrificed son be regarded as Ishmael (sws), they callously obliterated every sign and indication they found against their wish. Thus the word Marwah was distorted by their scholars and reciters to Mūrah, Mūriyā and Muryā as well as to other similar words. Similarly, they distorted Bakkah to Bukā’ and then by naming it the “Valley of Bukā”, the translators translate it as the “Valley of Crying” even though Bakkah and Makkah are synonyms. I have already presented my research on this earlier.⁷

One can imagine what happened to those names mentioned in the Torah and the Injīl which the Jews and Christians found against their objective. In particular, Aḥmad and Muḥammad are names none of whose letters they could have tolerated. Consequently, it is very evident from the Gospels that Jesus (sws) specified the name in the glad tidings he gave. What becomes simultaneously evident is that the great skill Christian scholars have shown in concealing this name can only be rivaled by the Jewish scholars.

Here I will first cite some references from the Gospel of John which mention these glad tidings about Muḥammad (sws). Later, I will discuss some of their special aspects. Jesus (sws) says:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. (John 14:16-17)

But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)

I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me. (John 14:30)

7. Amīn Aḥsan Işlāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 747-748.

When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. (John 15:26)

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:7)

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (John 16:12-13)

I have cited these references from the Gospel of John which is acknowledged by all the Christian sects. In the Gospel of Barnabas, the glad tidings of the advent of the last Prophet are repeatedly mentioned by his name Muḥammad (sws). I have not cited these references since the Christians of today, who are followers of Saint Paul, do not regard this Gospel to be authentic.

If the above-cited references are deliberated upon, certain things become very clear:

Firstly, these glad tidings are given with such clear attributes that they cannot be applied to anyone other than Muḥammad (sws). Consider the following words:

He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever. (John 14:17)

He will teach you all things. (John 14:26)

The prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me. (John 14:30)

If one deliberates on these words, after Jesus (sws), who else than Muḥammad (sws) can be regarded as the implied personality?

Secondly, though the incoherent discourse preceding and succeeding these glad tidings has been deliberately inserted so that the whole meaning becomes confused, yet the interpolaters were not successful in their endeavour: the incoherence and lack of connection of these sentences is very evident.

Thirdly, it seems that Jesus (sws) had mentioned a specific word as an attribute of Muḥammad (sws). Later translators and exegetes specifically targeted to alter it and tried their best to sever it from its true meaning. Some translated it as “counsellor”, some as “advocate”, some as

“intercessor” and others as the “spirit of truth”. As far as the word itself is concerned, it is said that in the Gospel of John in Greek, it is “Paracletus”. It is about the meanings of this word cited above that the Christian scholars have done everything they could to alter it. Obviously, this Greek word would be the translation of some Syriac word since the original language of the Gospels was Syriac. Who can now research into what the original word actually was? When for centuries, a whole nation is after concealing a word, how is it possible to discover it? It is a great favour of the Qur’ān that it gave us some clue of it. Some Muslim historians are of the opinion that the original Syriac word was *منحنا* which in Syriac has the same meaning as *محمد* and *أحمد* have in Arabic.

The subject of the verb *جَاءَ* in *فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ* is Jesus (sws). The implication is that when Jesus (sws) came with clear miracles as a manifestation of the predictions which pre-existed about him and as a deliverer of glad tidings of the last the Prophet, the hearts of the Jews had been led so far away that they regarded all his miracles to be products of magic. Moreover, the Jews also said that whatever miracles Jesus (sws) worked were not related to the help of the Holy Spirit; he is in fact helped by a demon called Beelzebub. Some people regard Muḥammad (sws) as the subject of the verb *جَاءَ*; however, this interpretation is absolutely against the context.

Here one needs to differentiate between the style of address which is very apparent between Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws). Moses (sws) addressed his people Israelites by the words “O my nation”; however, Jesus (sws) addressed them by the words “O Israelites”. This was obviously because he was neither related to his nation nor to any other nation; in fact, he was Jesus son of Mary. The Qur’ān has taken into account these subtle aspects of address.

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُوَ يُدْعَى إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الظَّالِمِينَ (٧)⁸

This is an expression of pity at the misfortune of the Jews: their very misguided hearts which led them to reject Jesus (sws) were also instrumental in making them reject Islam. They have fabricated all kinds of falsehoods about God.

The expression *الَّذِينَ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ* alludes to those falsehoods they had

8. And who can be more unjust than the person who fabricates a falsehood about God even though He is being called upon to Islam? And God does not guide the wrongdoers.

concocted to prove themselves to be superior and exalted. These included notions as: “we are the chosen and selected people of God”; “How can we be in need of the guidance of a prophet born amongst the unlettered;” “prophethood and messengerhood has always belonged to the Israelites; how can a prophet be born in some other race?”; “we have been directed not to attest to the prophethood of a person whose offered animal sacrifice is not consumed by fire from the sky”. The Qur’ān has refuted all these fabrications in Sūrah Baqarah and regarded them to be falsehoods imputed to God; at no place has God said these things. It is by referring to them that it is said that how unfortunate are these people who are being called to Islam and in response they are trying to deceive themselves all by their own self-concocted notions.

The words *وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ* are a reference to the practice of God mentioned in verse five earlier. They say that God does not guide people who wrong their own souls. The implication is that God had in fact done a favour to them that He guided them about the coming prophet beforehand so that they are able to recognize him themselves and also convince others in recognizing him; however, when they “honoured” this favour of God by obliterating the signs He informed them of, then such wretched people are not guided by God.

بُرِيدُونَ لِيُظْفَرُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ (٨)

This is a parable of their fruitless exercise: negating the guidance of God through their self-fabricated notions and self-invented innovations is much like trying to blow out the light of the sun and the moon. Such an effort will never bear fruit. The Almighty will definitely perfect His light. The half-moon will very soon bloom into full-moon, even though the disbelievers hate this to happen.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ (٩)

This verse is an explanation of the words *وَاللَّهُ مُتِمُّ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ* of the previous verse: The very God Who has decided to perfect His light, has sent forth His messenger with guidance and the true religion in order to make it dominant over all the religions of Arabia; this incident is certain to happen even though the Idolaters may detest it, and they try to

9. They seek to extinguish the light of God with the blows of their mouths; but God will perfect His light, much as the disbelievers may dislike it.

10. It is He who has sent forth His Messenger with guidance and the true religion so that he may make it prevail over all religions, much as the Idolaters may dislike it.

stop it with all their might.

The previous verse has words وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ which have a general connotation. This verse has words وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ which specifically refer to the Idolaters of the Quraysh. Together both these words embrace all the rival forces which at that time were opposing Islam. It is as if they are challenged to do whatever they can to harm this call; however, they will not be able to do so. It is the ultimate decision of God that through this Messenger He will make this religion of truth prevail over all other religions of this land. Consequently, this prediction shall certainly materialize. Very soon, the time came that when it was proclaimed that two religions will not be allowed to exist in Arabia; only the religion of God will reign here. This topic is discussed in Sūrah Tawbah in these words:

يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَن يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ هُوَ الَّذِي
أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَى وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ (٣٢-٣٣)

They want to extinguish the light of God with the blows of their mouths: but God has decided to perfect His light, though these disbelievers detest it. It is He who has sent forth His Messenger with guidance and the true faith that he may make it dominant over all religions, even though these Idolaters abhor it. (9:32-33)

Section II: Verses (10-14)

In the previous section, it was stated that it is very wrong of the believers to pledge a covenant of “to listen and to obey” with the Messenger of God, and when the time comes to honour this covenant, their love for life and wealth stops them from doing so. In this section, they are being informed of the right attitude which can lead them to success in this world as well as the next.

Text and Translation

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (١٠) تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ
وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ
تَعْلَمُونَ (١١) يَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
وَمَسَاكِينٍ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (١٢) وَأُخْرَىٰ تُحِبُّونَهَا نَصْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ
وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٣) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى

ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيِّينَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ فَأَمْنَتْ طَائِفَةٌ
مِّنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَكَفَرْتَ طَائِفَةٌ فَأَيَّدْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَىٰ عَدُوِّهِمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا ظَاهِرِينَ (١٤)

Believers! Shall I tell you of a deal which will save you from a woeful scourge? Profess faith in God and in His Messenger, and wage war for the cause of God through your wealth and through your persons. This is best for you, if you knew it. God will forgive you your sins and admit you to gardens watered by running streams; And He will lodge you in elegant houses which will be in the gardens of eternity. That is, in fact, is the supreme triumph. And another thing which you desire: help from God and a victory in the near future. And give glad tidings to the believers. (10-13)

Believers! Be God's helpers. The way when Jesus son of Mary called upon the disciples: "Who will be my helper in the caue of God?" The disciples replied: "We are God's helpers." So one group from among the Israelites believed in him while another rejected him. So We helped the believers against their enemies, and they triumphed over them. (14)

Explanation

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (١٠)¹¹

The implication is that after embracing faith, and after pledging a covenant of "to listen and to obey", if Muslims want to know what the right behaviour is, then the Almighty will inform them of a deal which will salvage them from a painful punishment. The word تِجَارَةٌ (deal) is explained in the next verse: Muslims should be ready to expend their lives and wealth for the cause of God and in return become worthy of God's forgiveness and His Paradise. This is the greatest success to achieve for which they should launch themselves with full vigour. In the verse under discussion, it is only said that the reward for this would be immunity from the painful punishment of Hell; however, in the next verse it is explained that such people will be rewarded with all the blessings of the Hereafter and in this world also they will be rewarded with the great victory they are desirous of. In this verse, only immunity from the torment of the Hereafter is mentioned because the real objective of a believer should be to shield himself from the punishment of God. If he is able to achieve this, then it is like achieving everything.

11. Believers! Shall I tell you of a deal which will save you from a woeful scourge?

تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ
لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ يَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ وَمَسَاكِينَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (١١-١٢)¹²

I have alluded to this linguistic style of Arabic that whenever a directive of adopting something or abstaining from it is to be given in the form of exhortation and counsel, then such directives are mentioned in the form of predicate sentences (sentences which are in the indefinite tense and occur as the predicate to the subject). Thus in this verse the words *تُؤْمِنُونَ* and *تُجَاهِدُونَ* are apparently in the form of predicates but they imply a directive. The benefit of this style is that it exudes affection for people and exhorts them to undertake a very profitable deal – a deal in which they are to submit their life and wealth to God in return for an eternal kingdom of heaven.

The words *ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ* indicate that though this deal will apparently seem non-lucrative because in this a person will have to sacrifice his immediate gain for deferred dividends, however, if people are able to grasp the reality behind it, they will realize that in return for some trivial merchandise and some borrowed moments of life, they have achieved the everlasting treasures of both worlds.

After a brief reference to these treasures of the world, people are exhorted to think that this is the greatest success they have achieved. They cannot achieve any greater success from the meagre sources of life they have. This lucrative deal is mentioned elsewhere in the Qur'ān in these words: *إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةُ* (٩:١١١) (God has purchased from the believers their lives and worldly goods in return for Paradise, (9:111)).

وَأُخْرَى تُحِبُّونَهَا نَصْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٣)¹³

A reference is made in this verse of an imminent victory in this world.

In my opinion, this victory refers to the conquest of Makkah. After migration to Madīnah, the greatest desire every Muslim cherished was

12. Profess faith in God and in His Messenger, and wage war for the cause of God through your wealth and through your persons. This is best for you, if you knew it. God will forgive you your sins and admit you to gardens watered by running streams; And He will lodge you in elegant houses which will be in the gardens of eternity. That is, in fact, is the supreme triumph.

13. And another thing which you desire: help from God and a victory in the near future. And give glad tidings to the believers.

the conquest of Makkah. On this victory depended the defeat of the real enemies of God, and it was the greatest evidence of the dominance of the truth. For this reason, every Muslim was desirous of it since it formed the objective of all his endeavours.

The verse says that this victory will be achieved in the near future. This shows that this *sūrah* was revealed close to the conquest of Makkah. Some people are of the opinion that it was revealed near the battle of Uhud. However, this cannot be regarded correct whatsoever. The most appropriate source of this *sūrah*'s period of revelation could have been this verse, and it is evident from it that the *sūrah* was revealed a little before the conquest of Makkah.

Once the verse mentioned victory, the Almighty bade the Prophet (sws) to give glad tidings to the Muslims that this blessed moment was not far off. It will soon manifest itself. People should keep their morale high and wait for it. The glad tidings of the conquest of Makkah have been given in the Qur'ān in various styles. Though it cannot be said with certainty, yet it seems from the way these glad tidings appear in this *sūrah* that this was the first instance when that they were given.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيِّينَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي
إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ فَلَمَّنتَ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَكَفَرْتَ طَائِفَةٌ
فَأَيَّدْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَىٰ عَدُوِّهِمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا ظَاهِرِينَ (١٤)¹⁴

In verse five, Muslims have been stopped from following the Jews because if Muslim start following them, their hearts will also be led astray like the Jews. In this verse, Muslims are being told that for them, the example set by the disciples of Jesus (sws) is worth following. These disciples did not reject him and in fact when he called them to the cause of God, they responded to his call with full fervour and enthusiasm to help and accompany Jesus (sws) in his mission. At last, it was these committed individuals who became a means for the supremacy of the truth.

It appears the word *hawārī* has come into Arabic from the People of the Book. It means a person who is a zealous and an ardent supporter. It is evident from both the Qur'ān and the Torah that when Jesus (sws) lost hope in the scholars and jurists of the Jews, he presented his message

14. Believers! Be God's helpers. The way when Jesus son of Mary called upon the disciples: "Who will be my helper in the cause of God?" The disciples replied: "We are God's helpers." So one group from among the Israelites believed in him while another rejected him. So We made helped the believers against their enemies, and they triumphed over them.

before the poor and the masses and the fishermen who inhabited the seaside. He is reported to have told them: “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” (Matthew, 4:19). At last, it was from among them that a small group of about three hundred odd individuals who with great zeal embarked upon co-operating with him in his preaching.

It is evident from the style adopted by the Qur’ān in *إِلَى اللَّهِ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي* that Jesus (sws) said that he had set off on the straight path delineated by God; those among his disciples who have the courage to accompany him should also set off with him. The disciples responded positively to this call by replying *نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ*.

It is evident from concomitant textual indications that the word *طَائِفَةٌ* used in the first instance connotes a small number and in the second instance to a large number. In other words, a small group of people (the disciples) professed faith and a large group persisted in disbelief; however, it was the small group which became worthy of God’s help and they triumphed over the group of disbelievers. It needs to be understood that ever since the Jews denied Jesus (sws), they were never given political supremacy. In his times, they were subservient to the Romans, and after Constantine converted to Christianity they have remained subservient to the Christians. Today also they are subservient to the Christians even though they apparently have an independent state.

At another place, this subject is discussed in the following words:

فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَى مِنْهُمْ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْخَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ
أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَأَشْهَدُ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ
فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ (٣: ٥٢-٥٣)

When Jesus felt disbelief from them [—the scholars of the Jews —], he called: “Who will help me in moving towards God?” The disciples replied: “We are God’s helpers. We believe in God and bear witness that we submit to Him. Lord, we professed belief in what you have revealed and we followed the messenger. So count us among those who bear witness.” (3:52-53)

With the help of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah*’s *tafsīr*. فالحمد لله
على ذلك (gratitude be to God for this.)

Rahmānābād

14th March 1978 AD

3rd Rabī‘ al-Thānī 1398 AH